Happy Father's Day by BigBadLittleRed

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)
Genre: Brotherly Love, Bullying, Child Abuse, Father's Day, Fluff and Angst, Homophobic Language, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Jonathan is a good big brother, Lonnie Byers is a douchebag, Period Typical Attitudes
Language: English
Characters: Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lonnie Byers, Will Byers
Status: Completed
Published: 2017-06-18
Updated: 2017-06-18
Packaged: 2022-04-02 01:35:51
Rating: Not Rated
Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply
Chapters: 1
Words: 4,598
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

A collection of Father's Days in Jonathans Byers' life over the years.

Happy Father's Day

Author's Note:

(A kinda sad, kinda cute fic that I thought of last minute. Hope you enjoy!)

1972 - Age Five

Jonathan Byers is five years old when he feels like he can properly contribute on Father's Day. He's been drawing for a long time now, so when he makes a picture of himself holding hands with his daddy he thinks it's an absolute masterpiece. He makes a pretty yellow sun, a nice big rainbow, some butterflies and flowers. It's colorful and bright; his teacher seems impressed so his daddy has to be as well when he sees it later on.

He meets his mommy outside after school, showing off his picture to her. She crouches down to observe it, compliments on his pretty rainbow (there aren't all the colors on the rainbow, but Jonathan could only remember five so he thinks it's okay) and how accurate the drawing of himself and his father is. He makes sure to show Will, who won't be able to draw their daddy any pictures for quite a while unfortunately, but the baby babbles in excitement so it must really be good.

"When does daddy get home?" He questions impatiently as he sits in the living room with Will, playing with blocks and baby toys to occupy his brother. His mother leans her head into the living room, stirring a bowl of something for dinner.

"Soon, sweetheart!" She promises, and he nods with a frustrated sigh. Will knocks over his block tower and shrieks with joy,

Jonathan can't help but smile.

Hours pass and his father doesn't come home, they eat dinner with their presents on the counter. Mommy seems upset, so Jonathan stops asking where daddy is, and instead tries to help Will eat his mushed peas. After dinner, Jonathan watches TV for a bit while mommy puts Will to bed, and soon it's time for him to sleep too.

"But daddy didn't get my present!" He objects sadly as he's ushered into bed, already in his pajamas and bathed. He'd made his mother walk all the way down the hall to make sure that he hadn't come home yet twice during his bath, but unfortunately he never came.

"We'll give it to him in the morning, okay honey?" She says, and her smile is a little off, like when something bad happens and she doesn't want him to be sad.

"Okay." He accepts glumly, allows his mother to tuck him into his bed and read him a story. He's out like a light in minutes, but his mother waits up far longer, awaiting the arrival of her husband.

Jonathan wakes up to the sound of arguing, heated whispers that drift through the crack under his door. He slips from his bed and carefully opens his door, leaning out to get a better sense of what's going on. He can't see anything but he knows it's his mommy and daddy, somewhere in the kitchen. Jonathan creeps down the hall, especially silent when he passes by Will's room, and stands near the kitchen entrance.

"How can I rely on you when you're out acting like you don't have a family?" He hears his mommy say, earning a gruff scoff from his father.

"I pay for everything don't I?" His daddy sounds so angry. He gets like that on the nights when he drinks out of those bottles that Jonathan isn't allowed to drink from, the ones that make his breath smell bad.

"Your son has been asking me when you were coming home all night; he made you a present for Father's Day!" The kitchen chair squeaks, Jonathan shifts a little closer and tries to peer in. His mommy is standing with her hands on her hips, and his daddy is holding his picture. Jonathan stands on his toes and holds his breath, hoping to hear his father's loving praise.

"Looks like a queer made this," Jonathan's heart stammers in his chest, what did that mean? *Queer?* He didn't sound happy, was Jonathan a queer?

"I can't even believe you right now!" His mommy points a finger right in the man's face; he shoves it away quickly and drops the paper on the counter without a care. "I'm going to bed; you can sleep on the couch." The woman storms away, coming to a halt when she spots Jonathan's head peeking from the doorway.

"Sweetheart, what are you doing out of bed?" Her voice turns so soft, like it usual is, not all angry and upset like it was when she got mad at daddy.

"I heard daddy," He says, confusion and a little bit of hurt pulsing low in his stomach. "What's a queer, mommy?" He whispers, watching the woman's face do a complicated thing before she scoops him up. "Daddy, don't you like it?" He asks, watching the man turn his way and observe him with glassy eyes.

"Yeah, sure kiddo, I love it." He nods his head, and Jonathan feels a burst of relief in his chest.

"I'm not a queer, am I?" He questions, unsure. His father steps over and gently takes him from his mother's arms, propping the boy on his hip and running his fingers over his light blonde locks. His breath smells nasty, like it does when he drinks from those bottles, but he's being nice tonight rather than grumpy so he doesn't really care.

"No, son, you're no queer." He promises, and Jonathan smiles a little.

"Real great, Lonnie." His mother doesn't sound too happy now, snatching her eldest from her husband and turning away from him. "Jonathan, don't say that word." She scolds quietly, Jonathan frowns but nods his head in agreement, still tired. He rests his head on his mommy's shoulder as he's brought back into his room, put back into bed, and given a nice kiss to his head.

"I love you mommy." He mumbles, eyes already shutting.

"I love you too, baby."

1975 - Age 8

"Jay, m'scared." Will sniffles to him as another crash sounds from the living room; Jonathan shuts his door and locks it. It's not the first time this has happened, but Will was a little oblivious to it before, he was so little. He pulls his brother over to the closet, moving his shoes and his old suitcase to the side.

They sit down in the closet and Jonathan pulls the door closed, muffling the shouting from the living room even more. He pulls his baby brother into his lap, holding him close and rubbing soothing circles on his chest like his mommy does when they cry.

"Don't worry Will, I'll protect you." He promises, Will hiccups and nods his head, clutching his big brother's other hand in his own tiny ones. "Want me to sing you a song?" He asks, leaning forward to see his little brother's teary eyes in the dim light of the closet. The boy nods once more, sniffling and wiping at his eye.

"Twist." Will tells him decidedly, and Jonathan smiles. Twist and Shout was one of Will's favorites, their mommy's too, they always danced in the kitchen when it came on the radio. He bites his lip, trying to remember the right words.

"Shake it up baby now," He sings quietly, squeezing his eyes shut and his own tears dripping down his cheeks as his father shouts

something at his mother and something hits the wall. He sniffs and grits his teeth, trying to hold it together. "Twist and shout," He continues weakly. "C'mon, c'mon, c'mon baby now." He tries to steel his voice, doesn't want to scare his brother any more than he already is.

"Work it out," Will adds, his crying having dried up a little, urging Jonathan to continue.

"Well work it on out... You know you look so good..." He tries to lilt his voice a bit but it cracks, he wasn't the best singer but it seemed to be helping. "You know you got me going now, like you knew you would." He presses his head to his little brother's, losing himself in the music and trying to drown out the sound of the fighting in the next room.

"Shake it up baby now," He hums, he notes that the shouting is subsiding. "Twist and shout... C'mon baby now, c'mon and work it all out." He can only remember that much, but he figures if he continues it over again, Will wouldn't question it.

"Twist and shout," Will mumbles, leaning back against his brother. The front door slams and quiet falls over the house, Jonathan has the urge to burst into tears, so confused and angry about why his parents couldn't just be happy like other parents.

"Twist and shout," He repeats weakly, sighing quietly and adjusting Will's position by pulling him closer. He rests his mouth against his brother's temple, settling on humming the tune. They'd stay in here a little while longer, at least until he was sure it was safe.

1977 - Age 10

Jonathan picks up his brother from school that afternoon and he can't help but feel sick to his stomach as Will shows off his card for their dad for Father's Day. He's so excited, beaming and bright as he holds the card in one hand and his brother's hand in the other. Jonathan forces a smile and swings their hands back and forth, complimenting his baby brother's talent and effort.

"Do you think he'll show it to his friends?" He questions excitedly as they hurry across the street and onto the opposite side's sidewalk.

"Maybe," He offers optimistically, even though he doubts the man will show more than an ounce of interest in it.

Jonathan hadn't made him a gift since he was around Will's age, the last thing he'd made was a clay pot for the man's desk. His dad had pointed out how misshapen it was and then told him that pottery was for sissies and threw it in the garbage.

Will hadn't seen this disgusting display, but their mother had, and she'd warned Lonnie to accept their younger son's gift with loving affection and apologize to Jonathan. He'd taken Will's drawing and smiled at him, like he had Jonathan when he was a boy. Joyce had taken her eldest son's pot from the trash and put it on the mantle, but Jonathan quickly stole it back and busted it into pieces with a bat out of frustration. Joyce had asked him what he'd done with it, but he simply told her he'd rather it be put away for safekeeping.

He hoped that Lonnie might be having a nice day today, and that he keeps his opinions to himself. The man was callous and cold, and it hadn't taken Jonathan long to realize that he wasn't much of a father anyway. He still sometimes craved for his approval, did things to impress him, but it all fell short under the man's scrutiny.

Lonnie comes home on time tonight, and he takes Will's card without hesitation. He listens to Will explain every little piece of the card, a small frown on his face that has Jonathan holding his breath. He sits and continues to eat his dinner, and he feels relieved that Lonnie is more focused on Jonathan tonight.

"So you didn't get me anything again, huh?" He asks as he shovels a forkful of mashed potatoes into his mouth, eyebrows raised and eyes dark.

"No sir." He shakes his head, turning his eyes down to his plate and unable to keep up this terrifying staring contest.

"No card? No shitty excuse for an ashtray this year?" He inquires sarcastically; Will is blinking wide eyes between his brother and his father.

"Lonnie!" Joyce hisses, and the man shrugs it off.

"I'm just saying, I just think I deserve a present from each of my boys considering how I feed and clothe them." He says with his voice dangerously low, Jonathan breathes calmly through his nose

and sits very still. "You got your mom something for Mother's Day." He insists.

"Yeah maybe cos she doesn't treat me like trash." He snaps, unable to help himself. Lonnie stands up with a loud screech of his chair, Jonathan bites his tongue.

"My bedroom, now." He commands quietly, and Joyce shifts.

"Lonnie please..." She sighs tiredly, and he holds up a finger to her.

"I will not tolerate disrespect in this house." He says simply, Jonathan rises to his feet and follows his father into the bedroom. He knows the drill, stands at the wall with his hands braced against it and leaning forward slightly. He listens to his father pull his belt from his waist, trembles a little at the crack of leather, squeezes his eyes shut. "We'll make it twenty-five, count."

The first lick is always the worst, his throat tightening as he calls out the number one quietly.

Jonathan retreats to his bedroom afterwards, his bottom sore and his face burning with shame and damp with tears. He sits in his bed and cries for a bit, until Will stumbles into the room and shuts the door behind him. The six year old climbs up onto his bed and pulls him into a tight embrace, seeming a little shaken himself.

"I'm sorry I got you in trouble," He whispers, and Jonathan shakes his head.

"It was my fault." He assures, holding his little brother close and wiping at his face to rid himself of those pesky tears. Will rests his head against Jonathan's chest, seemingly deep in thought.

"Next year we'll both sign my card," He offers, and Jonathan smiles.

"That's okay." He sighs, pressing a kiss to his little brother's head and squeezing him lovingly. He'd deal with a hundred lashes of a belt, hours of his father berating him, as long as he left Will out of it.

1979 - Age 12

"You'd better run, faggot!" Jonathan's scrawny legs are pumping as fast as they can, but his attackers are right on his heels. His chest was aching for air and his side had a stitch in it, but if he stopped now these boys would kick the crap out of him. Why'd they have to pick on him? Jonathan had never done anything to anyone in his life, what did he do to deserve this?

"Dad!" He shouts with relief when he comes up on his house and spots his father washing his car on the front driveway. He sprints

across the yard and runs right into his dad, clutching to the man's t-shirt and gripping it tightly.

"Jon, what the hell are you doing?" He snaps, turning his eyes as the boys chasing Jonathan pause on the road while his eldest cowers behind him. "Those boys bothering you?" He asks, turning to his son, who nods hesitantly. "Well come on, then." He grabs his son by the wrist, pulling him towards the edge of the street.

"Wh-What?" He drags his feet, but his father's grip is solid so he has no choice but to follow. The boys are stepping back cautiously, afraid of getting caught by an adult.

"Hey, c'mere!" He gestures the boys forward, they step into the yard hesitantly and approach the father and son. "Go on, Jonathan." He nudges his son forward, who looks back at him helplessly. "Be a man, Jon, fight back!" He urges, and Jonathan's eyes widen.

"Dad!" He objects, trying to turn away to race inside, but his father catches him.

"If you don't learn to stand up for yourself then you'll never be a man!" He shoves his son into the mix of boys; there were three of them, all around his size but not as small and meek as he was.

"Guess your daddy ain't gonna protect you, fairy boy." Jonathan struggles to push one of the boys from his space, getting easily knocked down. He hurries to his feet, tears in his eyes and anger pulsing through him, he throws a fist and it's not an exact hit but he nails Jacob Levy in the ear and it's enough to make the boy

really mad. He's tackled without hesitation, the other boy easily pinning him and delivering quite a few crushing blows.

"How'd you like this, faggot?!" He snarls, Jonathan frees his hands and pushes at the boy's chest, tears on his temples as he frantically tries to get him off. "C'mon queer, fight back!" Jonathan gets knocked in the nose and stars flash in his eyes, pain bursting throughout his face and a sob breaking from his lips.

Jacob gets up, all three of the boys each deliver a sharp kick to his sides or stomach, and then they're gone. Jonathan sits up, blood running over his lips and his body fresh with aches. He looks across the yard, where his father has gone back to casually washing his car. More tears build up in his eyes; he gets to his feet and stumbles into the house before he can break down completely.

He never tells his mother what happened, and his dad doesn't say a word either. Jonathan cries himself to sleep that night, he knows he has to be a failure for his father to hate him this much.

1980 - Age 13

Jonathan knew it was only a matter of time, he should have seen it coming, should have done something. He tried so damn hard to protect them, but he supposes this had been building up since Jonathan had been born. Lonnie wanted them to come out and help with the car, neither of them would want to but Jonathan knew not to argue. However, unfortunately Will hadn't really caught on just yet

on how disastrous this could be.

"But I don't want to!" Will whines, and Jonathan flinches as the hand swings around and slaps the boy across the face. The nine year old hits the floor, eyes wide and slowly becoming glassy as the pain starts to set in.

"I don't want to hear another word out of you, you hear?" Lonnie says sternly, and before his younger son can shed one tear, his older is shoving him away.

"You don't touch him!" He snarls, his hands curling into fists as his body shakes with rage and terror. He plants himself in front of Will, standing before his father and locking his legs in the hopes that they don't give out beneath him.

"Boy, you don't put your hands on me!" Lonnie rushes forward, backhanding his eldest son. Jonathan's head snaps to the side and he staggers back for a moment before slamming into his father, planting his feet and hitting out as hard as he can.

"Don't touch me, you bastard!" He shouts, trying to get as many hits in as he can.

Lonnie grabs Jonathan by the shirt and slams him against the living room wall. The air is knocked out of him; he kicks his legs wildly and digs blunt nails into his father's wrists as he's hauled from the ground. "I oughta pop a cap in your ass!" He pulls Jonathan forward and slams him back again, his head thudding against the wall roughly and his vision dotted with bright fuzzy lights.

"What's going on in-" Joyce must have come in from the back where she'd been gardening, her eyes falling on the scene as Lonnie drops Jonathan onto the floor. The young teen hits the carpet, bringing up a hand to cup at the back of his head where intense pain is pulsing through him. His vision is a blur ofbright spots, tears dripping from his eyes.

"Joycie, these boys need discipline." Lonnie insists, the woman's eyes are afire as she steps a little further into the room. Will scrambles across the carpet and kneels next to Jonathan, clutching tight to his shirt.

"Get out!" Joyce points a finger to the door, her voice a shrill but firm noise. The man plants his hands on his hips, obviously unimpressed.

"Joyce, you can't throw me out. How are you going to get by without me?" He demands, and she shakes her head.

"Not your problem anymore, you leave right now!" She tells him, and the man waves his hands in a careless gesture.

"Fine, fuck this." He turns and storms out, slamming the door behind him. Joyce's eyes are shining with tears and she's gone pale, but she quickly gathers herself before hurrying over to her sons.

"Honey, are you all right?" She takes in the sight of her eldest boy, his bright pink cheeks and one of them starting to flush a darker

color from his earlier rough treatment. Will is crying quietly, now clinging with one hand on his brother and the other on his mother.

"H-He... He hit Will." He gets out after a second his eyes wide and covered in a sheen of tears. The woman turns her eyes to the younger boy, cupping his red face between her slightly dirty hands and sighing.

"You're okay, yeah?" She asks, and Will nods his head before surging forward to bury his face in his mother's neck. Joyce hugs him tight, carefully reaching out and pulling Jonathan closer.

"Nobody hits Will, mom." Jonathan mutters, still seemingly in shock. She feels a knot of dread forming in her stomach at the thought of Lonnie having lain hands on one of her boys before. She pulls back a little, resting a gentle hand on Jonathan's unmarred cheek.

"Nobody hits you either, sweetie." She whispers, and watches in agony as her baby boy breaks down, a sob wracking his body before he drops forward to bury his face against her shoulder. She holds them both on the floor, her knees and back aching but her arms strong around them.

1981 - Age14

"Jonathan!" He turns his head at the voice, catching sight of his baby brother sprinting down the street with two boys on his tail. Jonathan races out in the road to meet him halfway, catching his little brother in his arms and swinging him around in a tight embrace. He sets the boy down, placing himself between Will and the approaching boys.

"They bothering you?" He murmurs, and the boy nods with pink cheeks and glassy eyes. Jonathan listens to the sneakers of the boys skidding to a halt; he turns and glares at the pair of younger boys.

"Getting your big brother to fight for you, fairy boy?" One boy teases, both of them were bigger than Will, and Jonathan grits his teeth.

"Why don't we make this a fair fight?" He grabs one boy by the collar and tugs him close, watching the boy's eyes widen as Jonathan pulls back his fist. "You wanna pick on someone, pick on me." He snarls, his fist blossoms with pain as it hits the younger boy in the face. It's not a hard blow; Jonathan's never really punched anyone before except for the few pitiful times he's tried to fight back when he'd been bullied. He's bigger than these boys though, so it must hurt, the kid's face is pudgy and round but not even baby fat will keep the impact from stinging.

He lets go and allows the boy to crumple to the ground, listens to him hiccup as he brings a hand up to hold his jaw. The other boy tries to escape but Jonathan grabs him by the back of the shirt, yanking him back and sending him sprawling on the concrete. He plants his foot on the boy's chest, rage swirling through him without anything to quench it. He could hurt them easily; he was the big boy now.

"Jonathan, please!" Will grabs at his older brother's arm, tugging him back away from the two boys. Jonathan turns to his baby brother, frowning down at him in confusion. "You shouldn't hurt younger kids, it's... it's not right to pick on someone smaller than you." He whispers, and Jonathan flashes back to the first time his father hit him. Not from a belt, but a hand to the face, remembers how powerless and scared he felt.

He feels ashamed of himself in that moment, and he turns back to watch the boy he'd knocked down sprinting away. The other boy is still sitting on the ground, sniffling and looking quite pitiful. Jonathan pulls him to his feet and dusts him off, guilt washing over him as he spots the intense red mark he'd planted on the child.

"Get out of here; keep your hands off of my brother." He grunts, and the boy nods his head before turning and racing off after his friend.

Jonathan tucks his hands into his pockets and feels tears burning under his eyelids as he takes in a few calming breaths. He didn't want to be his father, didn't want to be a bully. After all these year, hating his father so deeply, to actually become him after all of the suffering? It was a downright cruel fate in his opinion.

"C'mon, Jonathan." Will wraps an arm around Jonathan's back, leading him from the street and onto the sidewalk. He doesn't say anything as Jonathan wipes at a silent stream of tears on their way home.

When they get inside, Jonathan has the urge to run to his

room and lock himself inside, away from the world where he can't hurt anyone. Will knows him better than he knows himself, though, and quickly catches his big brother before he can walk away.

"It's okay," He assures, and Jonathan wants to break down right then and scream and shout and cry because *no, no it isn't.* "Next time, just tell them to go away." He hugs his brother tightly, and Jonathan hesitates only a moment before hugging him back."Just tell them to go away." Will repeats softly, and Jonathan nods his head.

He wasn't his father, he couldn't be, not with Will at his side.

1982 - Age 15

"I got something for you." Will says as he slips in the door, Jonathan laying on the couch watching TV and awaiting his brother's arrival home. He sits up with a frown, allowing Will a space on the couch.

The younger boy approaches, sinking down on the old couch cushions and pulling his backpack onto his lap. He unzips the bag and pulls out a picture, it has an orange painted handmade frame with little camera stickers on it. There are two pictures in the frame, on top is a picture of them from Will's last birthday, smiling for the camera and Jonathan's arm wrapped around his baby brother. The picture underneath is a doodle of that picture, amazing for a ten year old and beyond Jonathan's skills even if it was a little cartoonish.

"What's this for?" He asks, feeling in awe of his little brother's generosity.

"Today's Father's Day." Will shrugs, wrapping his arms around his backpack and tilting his head a little."Everyone was making picture frames for their dads, but..." He shakes his head, observing the picture for a moment as he gathers his thoughts.

"He still hasn't called, huh?" Jonathan says softly in sympathy, knowing that while Will was desperately searching for affection from their father just as he'd done, it would never be properly returned.

"I've got something better than a dad." He murmurs, and Jonathan shifts his arm so the boy can slip under it and give him a side hug. "Happy Big Brother's Day, Jonathan." He turns fully to hug his brother tightly, Jonathan hugs him back and observes the picture over his shoulder.

He didn't think he deserved such a great little brother, but he was blessed to have him.